

## **BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – JULY 29, 2008**

- John Carman called the Committee to order at 7:35 p.m.
- Phil Alperson provided the following updates:
  - The **official BRAC groundbreaking** took place at NNMC on July 3. Fortunately, so far there have been relatively few complaints from neighbors about construction-related problems. Construction at the NNMC South Gate has not caused any unusual problems for pedestrians.
  - WMATA engineers have been discussing four alternatives for the **proposed east-side entrance/pedestrian passage project at the Medical Center Metro station**. How much farther this project proceeds in terms of actual construction will depend on DOD's forthcoming decision whether to certify this project under the Defense Access Road (DAR) program, or if other funding sources become known. The four alternatives are:
    - A bank of high speed elevators on the east-side that would descend approximately 100' to the Metro platform;
    - East and west-side elevators descending approx. 30' to a mid-level platform, providing a more efficient pedestrian underpass.
    - A pedestrian bridge.
    - A no-build alternative with enhancements for safe pedestrian crossing.
  - In June the MNCPPC held hearings on **County transportation priorities** at which John Carman and Phil testified. Subsequently, the County Executive and County Council submitted a letter to the State delegation in Annapolis outlining the County's transportation priorities for FY2009. The Bethesda BRAC projects were added to the County's list of high priority projects of regional or statewide significance.
  - **There have been recent developments in Congress:**
    - On June 24<sup>th</sup> the House Appropriations Committee approved the FY2009 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. The bill includes language that expresses strong support for the DAR projects that have been requested for NNMC in Bethesda. (See below for more information about the DAR projects.). This is a major achievement, showing that the House of Representatives understands the traffic problems BRAC will create in Bethesda. While this legislation has many hurdles to clear before it becomes law, hopefully it will encourage DOD to respond favorably to the DAR requests. Many thanks to Representatives Chris Van Hollen and Chet Edwards for their work on this language. Legislative language supporting the NNMC DAR requests:  
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/dar-milconvaapprops-062408.pdf>

- On July 10, the Senate Appropriations Transportation-HUD Subcommittee passed the FY09 Trans-HUD bill that includes an additional \$3 million for BRAC-related projects along MD 355. This has a very long way to go before it becomes real money, and there is no assurance that it will, but this is the first hurdle to be cleared.
  - On July 15, Senators Mikulski and Cardin announced that DOD informed them that the requested **turn lane improvements at the North Wood Drive intersection will be funded within DOD's on-base BRAC construction budget** as part of their upgrades of the North Wood Gate, rather than await the outcome of a cumbersome DAR process. NNMC will work with SHA and County transportation officials to determine the best construction design. NNMC expects the project top cost approximately \$1 million.
  - **Bethesda BRAC, particularly the traffic issue, has been in the news recently.** Several articles were published relating to the groundbreaking, and most prominent was a July 20 Washington Post editorial: "A Roadblock in Bethesda -- The Pentagon shouldn't let traffic impede the success of a key military hospital's expansion." <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/19/AR2008071901518.html>
- Ilaya Hopkins reported that the **Coalition of Military Medical Center Neighbors** continues to reach out to neighborhoods beyond the immediate NNMC vicinity to inform them of the regional impacts of BRAC.
- Ollie Oliveria introduced Captain Daniel Zinder, the new Deputy Commander at NNMC. Ollie and Jeff Miller provided a detailed update on NNMC BRAC construction and highlights of the **NNMC Master Plan and Transportation Management Plan (MP/TMP)** which are still being revised. NNMC hopes to submit the MP/TMP to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) on August 8. While there is not formal comment period, NCPC will likely hold public hearings in the fall. In addition, MNCPPC will hold hearings. Some noteworthy items include: a third new Fisher House in addition to the two planned and two existing Houses; expansion of the Navy Exchange and Navy Lodge; the new Intrepid TBI Center; gate security improvements; expanded child care facilities; and possible new construction at USUHS. The TMP will focus on commuter solutions, to encourage NNMC personnel to use mass transit and other alternatives, such as car and van pools. DOD policy prevents NNMC from providing shuttle bus service to the campus, but the state or County may try to provide this service if the funding is available. Concerns were raised why NNMC would support constructing an east-side Metro entrance and encourage personnel to use transit but strand them at the Metro station by not providing shuttle service on a very large campus.
- Gail Tait-Nouri and Edgar Gonzalez of the County's newly-reconfigured Department of Transportation (MCDOT) led a presentation of the **Committee's recommendations for**

**pedestrian and bicycle path improvements** that had been the subject of previous BRAC Committee meetings. Edgar informed the Committee that MCDOT will craft a request for an OEA grant (DOD Office of Economic Adjustment) to fund the study of the proposed improvements that must be conducted before any County funding can be requested or committed towards construction. If OEA does not provide study funding, then MCDOT will initiate a process for the County Executive to submit an amendment to the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The map and list of recommendations can be found at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/bikeways-final-compressed-071808.pdf>. (NOTE that you must increase the size of this PDF to view it properly.) There are four main groups of proposed improvements: access to the paths from the north under the Beltway at Cedar Lane; along the west side of MD 355 at NIH; along Jones Bridge Road near the intersection of MD 355; and from the southwest near downtown Bethesda and NIH. MCDOT would work with SHA to ensure that any construction at the key intersections is coordinated with maintaining the integrity of the paths. Measures to promote pedestrian safety along the paths and at the intersections will be included.

- Dennis Yoder of the State Highway Administration and Andy Scott of MDOT discussed the **status of the intersection projects**. Surveying has been completed along the MD 355 corridor near NNMC has been completed. Data is being analyzed and design concepts are being discussed but at this point there is nothing conclusive to report. SHA expects to conduct formal public hearings early next summer but intends to keep the BRAC Committee informed and solicit their opinions earlier. Dennis explained that the four major intersections are the focus of the study and projected improvements (MD 355 @ Cedar Lane, MD 355 @ Jones Bridge Road, MD 185 @ JBR, and MD 187 @ Cedar Lane) but that data collected along the corridor can be applied to other intersections if D&E determines nothing can be done at one or more of the four main intersections to alleviate traffic congestion. Dennis also explained that the budgeted \$45.3 million may not be sufficient to cover the entire project costs, and that funding limitations may help determine which intersections are completed first. Concern was expressed by Committee members that these projects do not appear to be moving at a rate sufficient to be completed by September 2011, and that bureaucratic processes appear to be hindrances. There was also concern that construction designs may be decided without sufficient community guidance. John Carman requested that SHA provide the Committee with a timeframe and target dates for completion of the projects by 2011.
- Andy Scott distributed copies of **SHA's Technical Discussion Paper on a proposed Beltway Slip Ramp into the NNMC Campus**. According to SHA, "This discussion paper presents the results of the Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) review of a proposed new access point on I-495 (the Capital Beltway) between the existing Wisconsin Avenue/Rockville Pike (MD 355) and Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) interchanges with I-495. The SHA has developed this discussion paper to better understand the technical and environmental issues associated with the potential construction of a new access point."

In summary, “Due to the existing complexity of the Capital Beltway between I-270 and MD 185, adding a new access point at this location would further complicate traffic flow and create additional safety concerns due to weaving conflicts. In addition, the environmental constraints associated with a new access point could be significant. The traffic analysis conducted by the Navy and SHA show that the operational effectiveness of a direct access ramp on local traffic congestion would be limited, at best, due to several identified traffic flow and safety concerns. Given the current traffic operations and volumes associated with the MD 355 and MD 185 Beltway Inner Loop ramps and the issues presented in this discussion paper, SHA does not consider an additional interstate access point from the Capital Beltway to the NNMC to be a viable option for consideration and will not pursue an IAPA [Interstate Access Permit Approval] from FHWA [Federal Highway Administration].” The full text of the Discussion Paper will be posted on the BRAC web site.

Specific points discussed by the Committee included:

- The very close proximity of existing Beltways interchanges and merge lanes create significant traffic concerns and make FHWA project approval highly unlikely;
- Significant environmental impacts of this project on existing parks and residential neighborhoods, especially if collector-distributor lanes were part of the project;
- DEIS traffic studies concluded that, regardless of safety and environmental concerns, a slip ramp would remove approx. 600 cars during peak hours from the Beltway, a relatively small figure considering the number of cars that are on the Beltway during peak hours;
- Proposed alternatives, such as a spur off the Connecticut Avenue exit ramp, would exacerbate congestion along the Beltway, Connecticut Avenue, and intersections along Connecticut Avenue north of the Beltway.
- Any funds invested in a feasibility study for a project that clearly would not pass FHWA muster would be diverted from projects that can address BRAC-related congestion by 2011.

Concerns were raised that the discussion paper may be too technical in nature and not clear enough. SHA was asked to provide more concise bullet points.

- John Carman solicited comments from the audience. Follow-up questions were asked pertaining to the intersections project, shuttle bus service and slip ramp.
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m. The August Committee meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 p.m. at the BCC Services Center.

**Committee members in attendance, July 29, 2008:**

Phil Alperson, County BRAC Coordinator  
Jon Alterman, Bethesda-Parkview Citizens Association  
John Carman, Committee Chairman  
Shahriar Etemadi, MNCPPC  
Chuck Floyd  
Edgar Gonzalez, MCDOT  
Ilaya Hopkins, East Bethesda Citizens Assn.  
Janet Maalouf, Maplewood Citizens Assn.  
George Milne, Stone Ridge School  
Patrick O'Neil, Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce  
Lulu Gonella for Michael Plantamura, Chevy Chase View  
Andy Scott, MDOT  
Geoff Biddle for David M. Smith, Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board  
Paul Thaler, Locust Hill Citizens Association  
Sara Morningstar for Melanie Wenger, Montgomery County Intergovernmental Relations  
Dennis Coleman for Dan Wheeland, NIH  
Dennis Yoder, SHA/MDOT

**Ex-officio:**

Ken Reichard (Sen. Ben Cardin)  
Joan Kleinman (Rep. Chris Van Hollen)  
Miti Figueredo (Council Member Roger Berliner)  
David "Ollie" Oliveria, NNMC BRAC Program Manager  
Capt. Daniel Zinder, NNMC  
Jeff Miller, NNMC Transportation Program Manager

**Other attendees**

Dawn Chaikin  
Gerald Cichy, Maryland Transit Administration  
Jan Clark, USUHS  
Michelle Cornwell, Chevy Chase Land Company  
Cyrena Eitler, DOD OEA  
Ken Hartman, BCC Regional Services Center  
Greg Humes, Chevy Chase Valley Citizens Association  
Diana Jackson, MD DBED  
Kristi Kelly, JTF CapMed  
Fern Lapidus  
Michael Price, Montgomery County Police, Bethesda  
Gary Rentsch  
Ken Strickland  
Gail Tait-Nouri, DPWT  
Mendy Thaler  
Andrew Ujifusa, Gazette Newspapers  
Robert Weesner, North Chevy Chase  
Julie Woepke, MD DBED, Office of Military and Federal Affairs